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# Gallery and Studio

## SKETCHING FROM NATURE IN WATER-COLORS.

**I**T should be borne in mind that in working from nature, in the open air, you cannot attain such completion as in working indoors. You should govern yourself according to the time at your disposal, and have a definite aim; for example, to make a "pochade," or a study for form and effect, or a study for local color principally, or, finally, a study of detail. For the latter, lead-pencil or crayon or pen and ink, with or without a slight wash of sepia or neutral tint is sufficient. The principal good of making such studies—is that they give one facility in drawing foregrounds, and inform one as to the true cause of certain appearances, of texture and the like, in the distance. One should make one or two such studies every week.

THE "POCHADE" is not so commonly practised, except by artists. It has already been described in *The Art Amateur*, but it may not be out of place to explain it again. The "pochade"—which is a French term, without a good English equivalent—is a hasty memorandum of the impression made by a subject. It must not be confounded with the sort of painting that is styled impressionistic; for that may be finished in its way, while a "pochade" is always understood to be incomplete, and to be made merely for the artist's own use. The student will do well to use the small mirror in studying the effect before him, the frame with rubber bands in determining the size and proportions of his picture and the directions of its leading lines. He can then block out his landscape with lead-pencil or crayon, putting in boldly the masses of shadow. The colors can be applied at once and rather solidly, keeping local colors, shadows and half-tints as distinct as possible. With practice one comes to execute the "pochade" with the brush only, and this furnishes an admirable exercise in the use of water-colors. But when a memorandum of color is needed, and the necessary skill in handling the brush has not yet been attained, it may be recommended to the water-colorist to carry a box of crayons and make his "pochades" with them.

Made at a single sitting, so to speak, the "pochade" should render unmistakably the effect of weather, light, the season of the year and the time of day. It should also show plainly what it was in the landscape that fastened the attention of the artist. If it succeeds in these points it will prove very interesting and very useful; but it should never be copied from nor completed in the studio. The drawing after De Bellée (page 53) gives a good idea of how a sketch of this sort should look when translated into black and white.

The study for form and effect may take a whole morning or afternoon, or even several, if the weather holds

out the same. It is the most useful sort of study for the beginner. It is also the easiest, for it proceeds by well-marked stages, and so that the drawing which is secured at first is not obliterated, but is corrected and added to, as one goes on.

The first sketch may be made with a medium lead-pencil, which will give good strong outlines and masses of shadow. See illustration on this page. This sketch when finished should be partially effaced with crumb of bread, leaving the design sufficiently clear to serve as guide for the next stage. This consists in laying in the

tint of the local color, which will enable you to judge better of what colors to compose your half-tints, which are next to be laid on. These should be carried boldly into the shadows, but very carefully and sparingly on to the lights, because they count for more when contrasted with more feeble tints. These half-tints may at times be carried into the shadows while the latter are still wet.

The local color, however, should, as a rule, not be put on until the under preparation has set and is dry. The whole surface of the paper may then be moistened evenly with a large, soft brush and pure water, and the local color be laid on to the lights first and from them carried over the shadows and half-tints, it being modified as occasion requires, while it is being laid. While this wash is still wet, the darker shadows and markings may be taken up again and may be strengthened and varied with different tones.

In this manner of working, the ensemble, as well as the drawing and effect, is brought out more and more strongly from the beginning, nothing that is once gained being lost in the process. In the beginner's hands, it is likely to lead, in spite of all precautions and of the best judgment which he can use, to a rather dull and mechanical coloration. But he should not mind this, both because he will get out of it by degrees, and because it is essential that he should not get into the habit of disregarding form, as he must at first when sketching for color mainly.

Still, he should make a study of this sort, too, from time to time, to avoid falling into the other extreme.

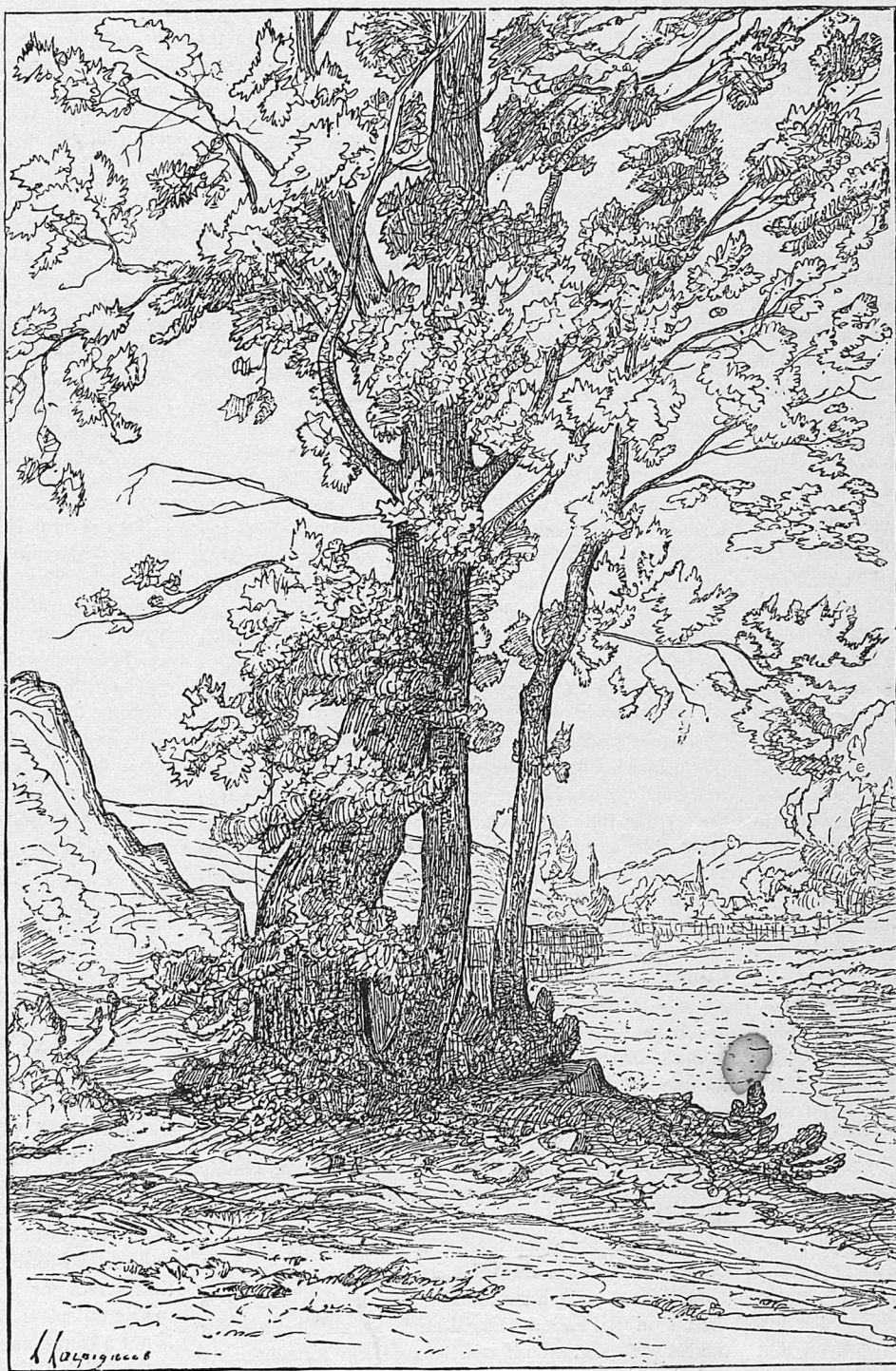
For this, in order to keep as much form as possible, the pencil sketch should be very neat and exact, and should be gone over with a fine brush dipped in vermilion, or in a mixture of brown madder and ochre du rue, or of the latter and black, at any rate, a light and warm tint, distinguishable from the superimposed colors when the drawing is near the eye, but hardly so when at a distance from it. This brush outline should grow fainter in the middle distance and distance than it is in the foreground.

On this preparation you lay at once local tones, shadows and half-tints, blending, modelling and adding other tints as you work, a little Chinese white or "jaune brillant" going into every combination, but less of it in the shadows and the foreground than in the lights and the

distance, and not enough anywhere to give a look of opacity. This small quantity of Chinese white or "jaune brillant" gives a certain ensemble, and makes the washes easier to handle.

When the drawing is dry, greater force may be given, here and there, by a few vigorous touches; or, if any detail is too strong, or a tone too raw, it may be softened or corrected by a glaze passed very lightly over it.

This manner of working enables you to come much nearer to the coloring of nature than you are likely to do by first using a shadow tint, which you suppose, rather than

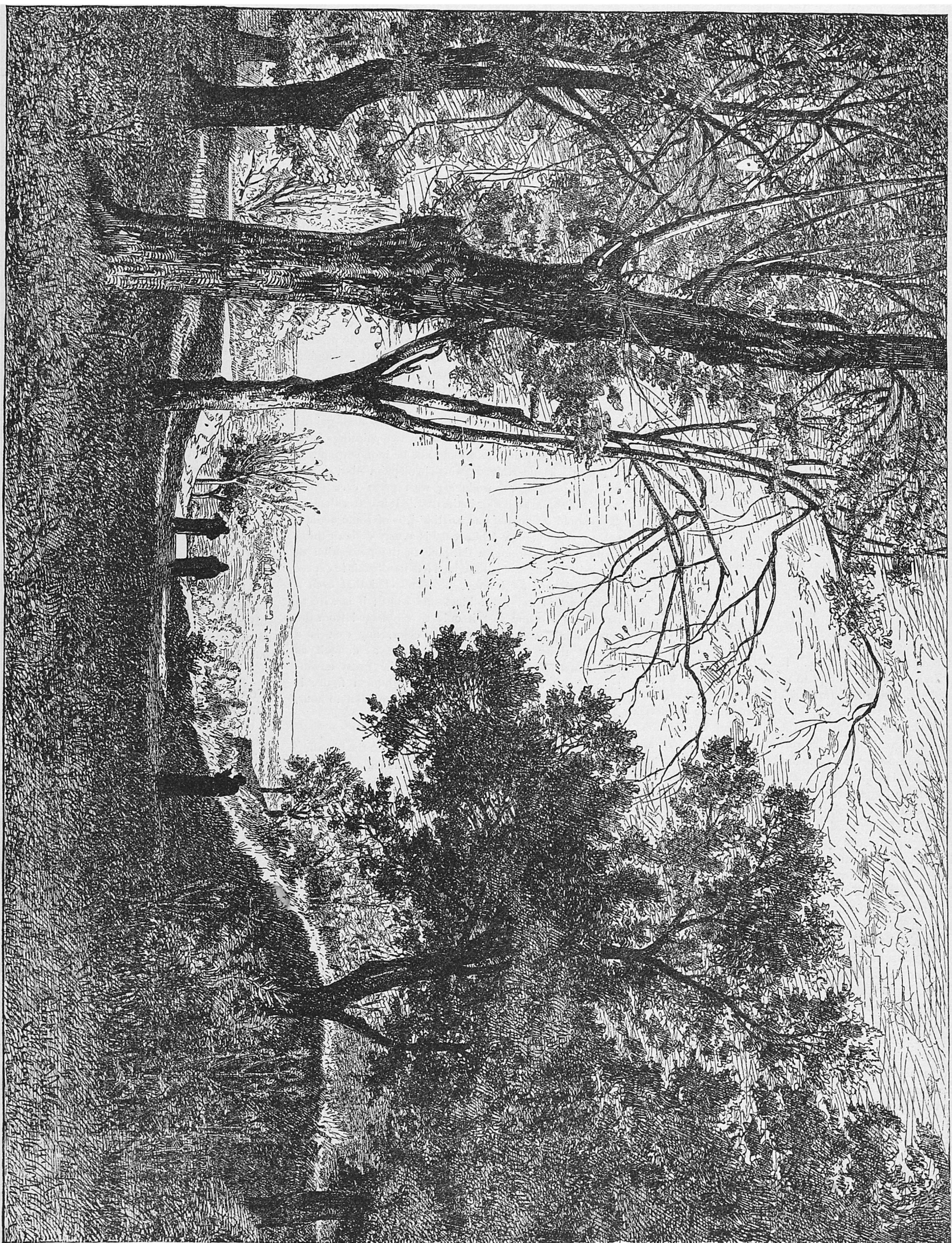


SKETCHING FROM NATURE IN WATER-COLORS. STUDY FOR FORM AND EFFECT.

shadows and reinforcing the dark accents, and should be done with one or more comparatively neutral tints suited to the nature of the subject. Many treatises on water-color recommend certain conventional tints for this purpose, but no one tint can suit every subject. One must judge what neutral tone will serve best, when the local color is afterward laid over it, to give the exact tone of the shadows in nature. This is difficult, and you need not expect to hit it just right at first. But you should approximate it at least.

It is best, at this point, to give to the lights a slight





SKETCHING FROM NATURE IN WATER-COLORS. LANDSCAPE AFTER DE BELLE, ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF THE "POCHADE." (SEE PAGE 52.)



know, will be brought right by the local tone to be passed over it. Here you mix each tint independently of every other, taking care only to match the tint which you perceive in nature. But it evidently requires a good deal of skill to strike at once the correct tone and value and to lay it within the proper bounds and blend it as much or as little as may be required with the neighboring tones, all at the one operation. Accordingly, you should use this method, at first, for studies of color. As you get on, though, you will find it the most available for subjects under a broad light, as that of noon or of a gray day. The other sort of study will always remain the best suited to subjects in which light and shade (*chiaroscuro*) play a principal rôle. For other subjects you will learn to work between the two methods.

**THE SKY.** The difficult point in painting a sky, whether clear or cloudy, is to make it recede. To succeed in this one should observe very carefully the colors and values of different parts of the sky, particularly of those approaching the zenith and those approaching the horizon. The *vibrating* quality of a clear sky it is also an object to render. A good landscapist in painting a perfectly clear sky will use a variety of tones, and play them among one another so as to get an appearance of unity without monotony. In water-color this is best done by going over the flat or simply gradated tint first laid with pure water and painting into it, with light but decided touches, using stronger and stronger tones until you arrive at the depth of color required for the upper part of your sky.

Stormy skies are best painted with a rather large black sable, taking one group of clouds at a time and modelling it as you lay it in. To allow of this the paper should first be moistened. Commence with the lightest tones; paint the half-tints and darker tones into them with another and smaller brush, and, before the work has dried, take out the high lights with a bit of blotting-paper rolled up in the form of a stump for crayon. For very "dirty" skies, a moistened bristle brush may serve better than the blotting-paper to take out lights.

When the sky is finished it will probably look too patchy, but a few washings with your large badger brush and clean water will soften and harmonize it sufficiently.

**THE DISTANCE.** It is a good plan to commence with the distance and let it govern the rest of the work, for if you commence with your foreground you may find it extremely difficult to bring your distance into harmony with it. It is a good rule also to leave details out of the distance as much as possible. It is true, you see them; but if you were to attempt to paint all you see in our atmosphere, a single picture might take you your lifetime. The thing to remember is, that however visible the detail in the distance may be, as a rule it is more conspicuous in the foreground, and the relations of part to part are what it is most necessary to study.

**MIDDLE DISTANCE.** The ground, if it is bare of trees and forms a large part of the picture, cannot be studied too carefully. One should proceed from the distance toward the foreground, taking particular notice of any cropping up of rocks upon the surface, also of the sort of soil that covers them—whether sandy or loamy—as well as the nature of the vegetation.

**FOREGROUND-TREES.** We have quite a number of handsome and picturesque trees which are but little known in Europe, such as the American elm, beech, and white oak, the tulip tree, the hemlock, etc. Others of our trees assume colors in the fall and in spring which are unknown to European artists. But little good can be got then by studying English or French or German manuals of tree-drawing and painting. You must go direct to nature and copy what you see. A few general hints may be useful:

In studying the trunk too great attention cannot be paid to the drawing of the shadows cast by the branches. The manner in which the bark cracks as the tree grows is a very important characteristic. Note how it peels off from the birch, scales off from the oak, forms a net-work of ridges on the willow, etc. The most important part of a branch is where it joins the trunk, or where one branch springs out of another. The manner of this is different in almost every species of tree. The way in which the roots take hold of or enter the ground is, likewise, important. In treating the foliage one should do, as in the distance, suppress detail as such, taking care of the masses, their values, their modelling, the character of their outline. For the outlying groups of leaves a simple touch with a ragged and badly crushed brush will often *indicate* them sufficiently. Enough *drawing* should, however, be introduced to characterize the species, and if the tree is in the immediate foreground,

the individual as well. This can be done with touches proportioned to the size of the leaves and by noting their directions and grouping. Should a branch come quite close, these touches will take the form of the leaves. All the illustrations in this article are good tree studies.

**WATER.** It is well to lessen the grain of the demitronch, when water is to be represented, by the use of a burnisher. It is sometimes of advantage to do the same for skies and distances. This will allow of finer drawing of the reflections, which must be done with flat touches, and without the aid of several expedients which are permissible in representing the real appearance of the things reflected.

ROGER RIORDAN.

#### HINTS ON FIGURE-PAINTING.

Selected from John Collier's "Manual of Oil-Painting." (Cassell & Co.)

As to the sort of drawing that is especially useful as a preparation to the practice of figure-painting, the author remarks: In the first place anything like elaborate stippling, or, indeed, any finicking work, should be absolutely eschewed. The figures should be carefully modelled, but the effect should always be got in the simplest and broadest way. For this reason I strongly recommend that the shading should be done with the stump. The effect will be more like that of oil-painting than any work done with the point could be, and the execution, also, is not dissimilar. It is also a very speedy process—which is a thing not to be despised; for, although a painter should never be in a hurry, yet he should always wish to do his work in the shortest possible time.

WHEN a sufficient power of drawing has been gained in this way, it is as well to do one or two paintings from a cast. These paintings should not be monochromes—that is, black-and-white drawings in oil paint—but should be true paintings, reproducing with great care every variety of shade and color in the cast. It is better that the cast should be an old one, so that it is of some definite color. A quite new white cast is a very difficult thing to paint, and requires a delicacy in the perception of minute differences of color which it is hardly fair to expect in a beginner; for it must be recollected that even a white cast is not mere black-and-white; it is sure to have color of some sort, if only that reflected from the surrounding walls. As regards color, any cast is a difficult thing to paint—indeed, almost as difficult as the human figure; but then it has the great advantage of not altering its color, as the human figure is apt to do from day to day, and even from hour to hour, to say nothing of its remaining quite still.

PARTICULAR attention should be paid to the blending of one tint into another, so that the modelling shall appear rounded and delicate.

WHEN we finally come to painting the human figure, we should still persevere with our original method; but we must look out very carefully for minute differences of tint; and, above all, we must pay great attention to the texture. Quite apart from the question of color, any one can see that a cast looks as if it were made of a different kind of stuff from human flesh; it looks much harder and less transparent; and this difference should be carefully preserved in our paintings. How, then, shall we give the proper texture to our flesh-painting? This is chiefly to be done by paying great attention to the edges. The outlines of a cast are uniformly sharp all over, and should be so painted. The human figure, on the other hand, is covered with little hairs, too minute to be seen separately, except quite close, but sufficiently visible to render the outlines soft and blurred. These hairs are much more abundant in some places than in others, and in some few places they are quite absent. These differences should be carefully rendered in all flesh-painting. For instance, even in women they are very abundant on the upper lip, whereas they are generally absent along the ridge of the nose. Again, the human skin is partly transparent, and this in itself makes the edges softer than those of a cast.

IN places the coloring of the skin is slightly broken and mottled; this is nearly always the case to some extent on the cheeks, even in people with very good skins. In such places the color must be put on accordingly; that is, one or two different tints should be dabbed on separately, and not smoothed too much into one another. Of course, there are all sorts of differences of texture in

different individuals, and they should all be carefully rendered. Wherever the skin seems rough, or covered with wrinkles too fine to be seen separately, the paint should be put on roughly; and generally in the first painting the brush-marks should be so put on as to indicate the general direction of any furrows or crinkles in the skin.

HAIR should be painted with a large brush in the first place, and every endeavor should be made, by brushing the paint on lightly and dexterously, to indicate the lie of the separate fibres. Then in the finishing, wherever a stray hair or two are seen definitely from a considerable distance, they should be put in separately with a writer brush.

A STUDY of the more obvious facts of anatomy is useful to the student, especially in the representation of motion, where, of course, direct observation of the model does not help us much; but we must always be on our guard against letting our knowledge override our observation. There is hardly anything in art more offensive than an elaborate display of misplaced anatomical knowledge, such as figures showing every muscle in their bodies, "looking," as Leonardo says, "for all the world like bags of walnuts." In fact, anatomy is a good servant but a bad master. Unless great care be used it is apt to encourage that (artistically) pernicious tendency of the natural man to represent things not as he sees them, but as he imagines they really are.

THE choice of a subject for a picture is one of great difficulty. That this is so may be readily inferred from the fact that the old masters went on painting the same narrow range of subjects one after another; while the moderns, in their efforts to be original, generally succeed in getting extremely bad subjects.

A REALLY good subject should be, in the first place, interesting; that is, it ought to arrest our attention and set us thinking. It ought, if possible, to be beautiful, and it ought to more or less explain itself; that is, one should be able to guess at the general nature of the incident without having recourse to an elaborate written explanation. It is true that many fine pictures do not fulfil these requirements, but I venture to think that they would be still finer if they did.

FOR many reasons modern subjects ought to be the best. After all, what is going on around us at the present day is more interesting to a healthy mind than all the records of the buried past. And, again, modern subjects have the great advantage that they can be so much more truthfully rendered. All historical painting is more or less guess-work, and is certain to be false in many particulars; a falsehood which may pass muster to-day, but which will probably be found out eventually, as historical research advances.

BEFORE making the slightest sketch, before even thinking of the composition of the picture, the painter should familiarize himself with all the surroundings of his subject. He should know how the people were dressed—if they are historical characters, what they looked like—what were their habits and customs, what houses they lived in, what scenery surrounded them. Having got fairly clear ideas on all these points, he should let his imagination play round the subject, until it seems to make some kind of mental image. If this mental image appear to be fairly well suited for a picture, a rough sketch should be made of it in charcoal. Should the image seem hopelessly unpictorial, the subject must be turned about in the mind until some image of better promise appears.

WHEN the charcoal sketch has been made, the figures should be altered and shifted about until the lines of the composition seem fairly satisfactory. Then a little colored sketch should be made, with no pretensions to accuracy of any kind, but merely giving the rough idea of the coloring and the light and shade. This, also, should be knocked about until the result seems promising. Then models should be selected with great care as appropriate as possible to the personages of the picture.

IT sometimes happens that a model with an unsuitable figure will have a suitable face, and *vice versa*.